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Special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 1836 (2008), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 30 September 2009, and requested me to report on progress made towards achieving the core benchmarks set out in my reports of 8 August 2007 (S/2007/479) and 19 March 2008 (S/2008/183) and, based on that progress, make recommendations on any further adjustments to the military and police components of UNMIL. My report of 10 February 2009 (S/2009/86) provided preliminary recommendations regarding the third stage of the Mission's drawdown and indicated that precise proposals would be submitted to the Council based on the findings of a technical assessment mission. The present report outlines the findings of that assessment mission and my recommendations for the third stage of the UNMIL drawdown.

II. Technical assessment mission

2. The technical assessment mission, which was led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and comprised participants from the Department of Field Support, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Safety and Security and, in situ, UNMIL and the United Nations country team, visited Liberia from 26 April to 6 May. The mission received detailed briefings from UNMIL and the United Nations country team and consulted a broad cross-section of Liberian and international stakeholders, including the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, several Government ministers and institutions, members of the legislature and judiciary, representatives of political parties and civil society, the leadership of the national army, police and other security agencies, international non-governmental organizations, members of the donor and diplomatic communities, including the International Contact Group on Liberia, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and senior executives of ArcelorMittal and Buchanan Renewables, private companies that have invested in Liberia in the past three years.

3. Members of the mission visited Bomi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, Maryland and Nimba counties, as well as the National Police Training Academy, the Monrovia Central Prison and the Edward Binyah Kessely camp, where the new

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Armed Forces of Liberia are undergoing training. Part of the mission travelled to Freetown, where members met with the Deputy Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the UNMIL military guard force that is securing the Court. A military team from the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) came to Monrovia to discuss inter-mission cooperation issues with the assessment mission. Prior to its departure from Liberia, the mission discussed its findings with President Johnson-Sirleaf, the International Contact Group on Liberia, the United Nations country team and UNMIL.

A. Findings of the assessment mission

4. All interlocutors advised the mission that an objective assessment of the progress made in consolidating the peace in Liberia must be placed in the context of the significant challenges inherited by the present Government when it came into office in 2006 and of the state in which UNMIL found Liberia at the end of the conflict in 2003. In that regard, they recalled that, at the end of the 14-year-long civil war, Liberia was a completely failed State, with three warring factions controlling different parts of Monrovia and the interior. The already limited infrastructure lay in ruins, a third of the country's population has been displaced, and the public sector had completely collapsed. The national army and the police had disintegrated into various factions, and what remained of the security sector was dominated by a proliferation of agencies created by successive regimes to persecute political opponents; the justice system had completely broken down; and criminal economic exchange, dominated by the illegal exploitation of natural resources, was thriving. These interlocutors also pointed out that most areas in which progress had been slow, in particular the security and rule-of-law sectors, were afflicted by challenges that predated the conflict and that transforming a State designed to serve a minority settler population based in Monrovia would require sustained, long-term efforts by the Government and its international partners. They stressed, therefore, that the challenge to the consolidation of peace in Liberia was not to re-establish a State apparatus destroyed by the war, but to build from scratch institutions that are inclusive, free of corruption and able to provide services to the entire population.

5. In that context, the assessment mission noted that, notwithstanding the extremely low starting point, peace consolidation efforts in the country had made progress in many areas and that the Government had made remarkable strides in implementing its ambitious post-conflict recovery programme. Key achievements cited by the mission's interlocutors include: the expansion of access to health-care services; the enforcement of a law on free and compulsory primary education; an increase in economic growth from 5.3 per cent in 2005 to 9.5 per cent in 2007; the adoption of measures to meet the preconditions for lifting sanctions on timber and diamond exports; and the implementation of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme, which reduced revenue leakages in State-owned enterprises. The value of the country's exports rose from $131 million in 2005 to $260 million in 2008, while foreign direct investment, which was extremely low in 2005, was estimated at $200 million in 2008. On 16 April, nearly half of the country's external debt of $2.9 billion was written off. The President has also launched a campaign to eradicate corruption, declaring it "public enemy number one", although weaknesses in the justice system have hampered the prosecution of high-profile crimes.

B. Security challenges and threat analysis

6. Liberia has remained generally stable since the deployment of UNMIL in 2003. However, despite the considerable progress made, the prevailing stability in the country remains extremely fragile, owing mainly to the limited capacity of the country's security and judicial institutions and a myriad of residual challenges from the civil war. Many of the mission's interlocutors expressed the view that the existing peace and stability could not be sustained without a significant presence by the UNMIL military component and cautioned against its hasty drawdown and withdrawal. While acknowledging that Liberia does not face any imminent military threat, they pointed to many contentious issues and political undercurrents that, without the deterrence provided by UNMIL, could rapidly develop into major destabilizing factors. Most of those issues are rooted in the same factors that led to the civil war, including the political and economic marginalization of the indigenous majority, rampant corruption, land disputes exacerbated by long-standing ethnic cleavages and the concentration of State services in Monrovia. The dysfunctional justice system perpetuates a culture of settling disputes through mob violence, and the thousands of unemployed youths, ex-combatants, deactivated former soldiers and other retrenched security personnel constitute an incendiary mix of disaffected people with a proclivity to violence that could be easily exploited by spoilers. The country is still plagued by a high incidence of violent crime, particularly armed robbery and rape, and many Liberians informed the mission that, six years after the end of the conflict, they still do not feel secure.

7. Under these circumstances, minor disputes frequently and rapidly escalate into major security incidents requiring responses that are beyond the capacity of the Liberian National Police. The mission's interlocutors cited the recurrent violence triggered by land disputes in Nimba County involving ethnic groups that were on opposing sides during the civil war, which have been brought under control only after UNMIL military intervention. Ten of the country's 15 counties are currently affected by land conflict, with many disputes arising as a result of the illegal occupation of properties during the war. President Johnson-Sirleaf has established ad hoc mechanisms to address the recurrent disputes in Nimba County. However, no national mechanism has been established to systematically address the problem of land tenure, and the Legislature has yet to enact the Land Commission Act. In the meantime, progress has been made in addressing some aspects of the problem, including under the National Forestry Reform Law of 2006, which elaborated a formula for the equitable distribution of land rental fees among host communities, counties and the Government.

8. The mission's interlocutors also cited another serious incident that required military intervention by UNMIL, in Gbarnga, Bong County, where, on 27 February 2009, several hundred ex-combatants organized and assembled within hours to exact revenge for the murder of a comrade, burning down the local police station and attacking local officials as well as United Nations and local police officers. In that connection, the mission's interlocutors expressed particular concern about the organizational capacity and residual command structures of ex-combatants and deactivated soldiers. While the ex-combatants' organizational and command structures are generally used for economic purposes, they are also used for organized predatory behaviour or violent protest. Many of the 14,000 deactivated Armed Forces of Liberia soldiers also maintain viable command and control

structures, which are utilized to organize recurrent, sometimes violent, demonstrations to challenge the legality of their deactivation or demand benefit arrears owed by the Government.

9. The impact of the global economic downturn is expected to exacerbate many of those issues and contribute to an increase in violent crime and civil unrest. Private international companies informed the mission that their decision to invest in Liberia had taken into account the security cover provided by the UNMIL force. In Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, ArcelorMittal and its subcontractor have laid off some 1,700 workers, including ex-combatants, triggering protests and threats of violence against the company. Civil society groups in Buchanan expressed concern that the rapid retrenchment of a large number of workers could reverse the downward trend in violent crime. In Sinoe County, the drop in rubber prices from $1,200 to $289 per ton has resulted in ex-combatants and unemployed young people abandoning illegal rubber-tapping to join illegal gold-mining communities in Sapo National Park or engage in illegal alluvial diamond-mining in other areas, contributing to conflict over access to resources. Much of the illegal mining activity takes place in parts of the country that remain inaccessible to State authorities. Moreover, the illegal exploitation of resources not only increases the risk of conflict when legal arrangements are established, but also perpetuates the risk of the proceeds from such activities being used by spoilers to sabotage the prevailing stability.

10. On the political front, a number of ongoing processes are generating tensions that could undermine the prevailing stability as the crucial presidential and legislative elections of 2011 approach. Representatives of civil society groups and opposition political parties expressed the view that the Government was only paying "lip service" to national reconciliation. They felt strongly that the reconciliation process must go beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address pressing issues at the grass-roots level.

11. In the meantime, the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which will conclude in June, has elicited open threats from powerful former warlords, amid demands from civil society for the prosecution of those who committed atrocities during the conflict. The individuals concerned are potential spoilers, as are the entrenched interests threatened by the Government's reform programme and anti-corruption campaign, and some prominent figures who harbour bitterness over the targeted Security Council sanctions still affecting them. Some of the mission's interlocutors expressed the view that those sanctions impeded national reconciliation, while others stressed the importance of fighting impunity. The latter also held the view that the frozen assets that were illegally acquired from the State should be used to pay reparations to victims of the conflict.

12. All stakeholders characterized the 2011 elections as a crucial milestone that will test the sustainability of the peace and the capacity of the country's security, electoral and rule-of-law institutions to conduct a major operation. Citing the 1985 and 1997 elections, they recalled that Liberia had historically reverted to war following elections perceived by the general population as lacking credibility. A number of election-related issues, including the composition of the National Elections Commission, are already creating political tensions. Some opposition political parties informed the assessment mission that they would not participate in the elections unless the composition of the National Elections Commission was

reconstituted in consultation with the parties. However, other parties pointed out that the Commission, as currently constituted, had displayed impartiality in organizing by-elections that were won by opposition candidates and had also consulted all parties on proposed electoral law reforms. Seventeen opposition political parties who met with the mission also accused the ruling party of rejecting national reconciliation and dialogue, pointing out that the failure of the Unity Party to attend the meeting with the assessment mission as well as previous meetings convened by the International Contact Group on Liberia confirmed its disdain for dialogue with the opposition. All of the mission's interlocutors expressed the view that the 2011 elections would be contentious. In that connection, they strongly recommended that the conduct of free and fair elections be among the core benchmarks guiding the drawdown of UNMIL and that the Mission maintain a significant troop level through the elections. It is also expected that the national authorities will require substantial assistance from the United Nations and, to that end, the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme dispatched an electoral needs assessment mission in May.

13. The situation in the subregion presents major security risks for Liberia. The Mission's interlocutors were particularly concerned about the uncertain intentions of an estimated 2,000 Liberian combatants associated with pro-Government militias in western Côte d'Ivoire and an undetermined number of Liberian elements associated with the Forces nouvelles in northern Côte d'Ivoire. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has consistently maintained that its disarmament programme will not benefit foreign combatants. The uncertain political situation in Guinea and recent violent incidents involving the ruling party and the main opposition party in Sierra Leone are also a source of concern. During the run-up to the local elections in Sierra Leone in March, large numbers of Sierra Leoneans in the border districts, fearing violent clashes between the two parties, fled into Liberia.

14. Given its weak law-enforcement capacity and the extreme poverty in the country, Liberia is also vulnerable to infiltration by international drug-trafficking cartels, a trend that is already affecting neighbouring Guinea and Sierra Leone as well as other countries in the subregion. The mission's interlocutors observed that the presence of UNMIL served as a strategic deterrent against the use of the territory of Liberia as a transit point for international drug trafficking. However, those interlocutors also noted that unless Liberian security agencies develop the capacity to mitigate trafficking once UNMIL withdraws, the threat would be global in scope, as transnational drug trafficking tends also to involve weapons, money-laundering and acts of terrorism.

C. Status of implementation of the core drawdown benchmarks

15. My report of 8 August 2007 (S/2007/479) detailed the following core benchmarks for guiding the drawdown of UNMIL: (a) completion of the basic training of 3,500 Liberian National Police personnel by July 2007; (b) completion of police operating procedures by December 2008; (c) completion of the formation of the 500-strong police Emergency Response Unit by July 2009; (d) equipping of police personnel and their deployment to the counties, as well as the building of police infrastructure by December 2010; (e) finalization of the national security strategy and architecture and their implementation throughout the country by December 2008; and (f) training and operationalization of the first and second

battalions of the Armed Forces of Liberia by September 2008 and September 2009, respectively. In my report of 10 February 2009 (S/2009/86), I also identified the restoration of State authority throughout the country as a core benchmark.

Armed Forces of Liberia

16. The United States of America-led training of the new 2,000-strong Armed Forces of Liberia is making steady progress. The new army will comprise two infantry battalions, an engineering company and a military police unit. Advanced infantry training of the two battalions will be completed in June 2009, following which the first battalion will undergo the United States Army Training and Evaluation Programme from July to September, and the second battalion from October to November. Post-programme training, which will involve UNMIL, is currently scheduled to begin in September for the first battalion and in mid-November for the second battalion. The United States trainers informed the mission that they envisage the new Armed Forces of Liberia attaining full operational capability and readiness to assume some security responsibilities from UNMIL in mid-2012.

17. Seconded officers from ECOWAS countries, including Ghana and Nigeria, which is providing an army chief of staff, are serving in command posts to fill the leadership gap in the new Armed Forces of Liberia. In addition, four officers from the former Armed Forces of Liberia have been rehired after a thorough vetting process and are serving at force headquarters. However, the mission was informed that 146 officers would be required in order for the new army to be fully operational and that developing an officer corps from within the young, inexperienced army would require time and considerable mentoring by experienced officers. Serving officers from the United States army are helping to train and mentor the army leadership, and the Government of Liberia, the Armed Forces of Liberia, the United States and UNMIL have initiated discussions on the role that UNMIL and other partners will play in training and mentoring the officers. The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces of Liberia emphasized the importance of increasing the involvement of ECOWAS officers in training and mentoring the new army, taking into account the subregional organization's common defence architecture.

18. Many of the mission's interlocutors expressed concern about the capacity of the Government to sustain the new Armed Forces of Liberia, including the defence sector infrastructure. The Barclay Training Centre in central Monrovia is scheduled to be handed over to the Ministry of Defence by the United States in August, while Camp Ware and Edward Binyah Kessely Camp, on the outskirts of Monrovia, will also be handed over by the end of the year. China has constructed barracks in Gbarnga, Bong County, which were handed over to the Government in May, along with a one-year warranty for repairs and maintenance. However, developing and sustaining the new Armed Forces will require extensive planning and the long-term commitment of international partners.

19. The United States, which is also taking the lead in assisting the Government of Liberia in the process of building a coastguard over the next two years, informed the mission that its approach will be holistic and will include doctrine, training, equipping, facilities and port construction. The United States will also sustain the coastguard, which will initially comprise 60 personnel. Four rigid inflatable boats will be deployed to Monrovia and Buchanan. The development of the command

cadre will include training the newly appointed commander and deputy commander in the United States.

Liberian National Police

20. The basic training of more than 3,500 Liberian National Police officers was completed on schedule in 2007, but the achievement of full operational capability is proving to be a complex process beset with many challenges. UNMIL is now focusing on advanced training, strategic advisory support, mentoring and facilitating the deployment of the police to the counties. However, all stakeholders provided a sobering assessment of the efforts to develop the Liberian National Police, characterizing the force as ineffectual. Among the many challenges identified were the poor conditions of service and the ineffective management of the police force, as well as inadequate transport, communications equipment and infrastructure. In many counties, police deployment does not extend to all districts. Despite the establishment of more than 500 community policing forums around the country, overall police relations with the communities they serve remain poor, and representatives of civil society informed the mission that many Liberians still fear the police. All of the mission's interlocutors were of the view that the credibility of the police was negatively affected by indiscipline, corrupt practices and abuses of the population, as well as its inability to maintain law and order or respond effectively to crime.

21. The mission identified several reasons for the serious deficiencies facing the police, including shortcomings in the training and mentoring that UNMIL police advisers are providing. The Mission has a shortage of specialist trainers in various areas, including change management, programme development and strategic planning. A second challenge is the absence of commensurate donor support to equip the police and to establish police infrastructure in the counties, including police stations and barracks. The Government of Liberia, which operates on a cash-based budget, allocated some $6.9 million towards the operational budget of the police force, including salaries, during the fiscal year 2008/09, far short of the estimated $20 million required for the operational effectiveness of the force. Police officers deployed to the interior of the country receive a monthly salary but no living allowances, accommodation or other incentives to remain at their posts; consequently, absenteeism is very high. The Liberian National Police is further hampered by leadership, management and administrative weaknesses at all levels of its command structure and lacks an external oversight mechanism.

22. A 300-strong Police Support Unit was established in 2005 and included officers trained and equipped with weapons by Nigeria. However, the unit is currently seriously depleted owing to a high rate of attrition, and many of its personnel have been recruited into the Emergency Response Unit. The police academy does not currently have a training programme for the unit.

23. The development of the 500-strong Emergency Response Unit is making steady progress, with 209 officers trained so far, who are, however, still only marginally operational. In the first major test of its performance, the unit played a significant role in recapturing 40 prisoners who had escaped from the Zwedru corrections facility in April. However, some interlocutors expressed concern that some unit personnel had reportedly been involved in armed robberies in Monrovia. The United States, which is leading the development of the Emergency Response

Unit, has provided trainers under UNMIL in addition to equipment, weapons and uniforms for 500 personnel, while Ireland has provided vehicles and funding for training. The mission was informed by the United States that there would be a pause in the Emergency Response Unit recruitment programme once the unit's strength reached 350 to 400 officers, in view of the diminishing pool of eligible recruits, and that it will at that time assess its performance and command structure and the capacity of the Government to sustain the unit.

24. Important achievements in the area of capacity-building have been realized at the National Police Training Academy. Liberian trainers conduct almost all of the basic training under the supervision of UNMIL trainers and are also increasingly capable of managing the Academy, although its operations are still heavily dependent on the Mission. Only 19 United Nations police officers remain at the Academy to provide guidance and specialized training.

25. There is an urgent need to put the police development project back on track. President Johnson-Sirleaf informed the mission that she intends to introduce major changes in the police force shortly. The recently developed Liberian National Police five-year strategic plan provides a framework for bringing together the Government of Liberia, the police leadership, donor partners and UNMIL around an agreed set of priorities, which would facilitate the effective coordination of bilateral assistance. The United States and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have expressed interest in taking the lead in developing communications infrastructure for command and control for Liberian law enforcement agencies.

Development of a national security strategy and architecture

26. The security sector reform process provided for by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in Accra in 2003 focused on restructuring the Armed Forces of Liberia and the Liberia National Police. As a result, a system-wide approach to security sector reform was not factored into early planning for UNMIL, whose initial mandate concentrated on the restructuring of the police, while the United States led the building of a new army. As the shortcomings of that approach were revealed, other aspects of security sector reform were subsequently added to the UNMIL mandate. At the Mission's request, the United Kingdom agreed to fund a security sector reform adviser to my Special Representative for Liberia, Ellen Margrethe Løj. However, that assistance will expire in October 2009. In view of the need to continue to pursue a comprehensive approach to security sector reform, the mission recommended that all options be considered with a view to the retention of that post in UNMIL.

27. By the time the Government introduced a national security policy aimed at enhancing coordination and coherence in the provision and governance of security, the restructuring of the army and police had already advanced considerably. The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia expressed his concern to the mission that efforts at defence reform focused on the tactical level, with little consideration given to developing a strategic architecture. Those deficiencies are now being addressed, and a draft national defence strategy is expected to be finalized in May. Key outstanding issues include defining the mission, deployment and strength of the Armed Forces of Liberia, as national stakeholders expressed divergent views on those issues. President Johnson-Sirleaf informed the mission that her Government would concentrate on sustaining the new Armed Forces of Liberia at its present

strength of 2,000 personnel and on ensuring that it attains full operational capability before considering an increase in its troop strength.

28. Given the plethora of security agencies created by previous regimes, the need to streamline security agencies and repeal security-related legislation was identified in the country's national security policy implementation matrix as "priority number one". However, the draft enabling legislation, or Omnibus Act, has not yet been submitted to the legislature. Under the current proposals, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Ministry of National Security would be merged into the Liberian National Police, and any excess or unqualified personnel would be deactivated. The national security strategy emphasized the need to establish an effective service to ensure border security, but the systematic restructuring of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization has not yet started. Some immigration officers have received training in Ghana, while France has provided assistance to the Bureau's outposts along the border with Côte d'Ivoire, and the United States, UNMIL and United Nations agencies have rehabilitated some border posts. UNMIL has also initiated efforts to assist the Bureau in developing a strategic plan, which could help to attract donor support. Members of the legislative committees on defence and security emphasized the importance of external oversight of the security sector and expressed the view that the absence of effective governance mechanisms was the main reason why Liberia, in the past, had had partisan, undisciplined and corrupt security institutions.

29. The emphasis on restructuring the army and police without commensurate assistance for the justice and corrections systems has also created bottlenecks in the rule-of-law sector, further undermining the effectiveness of the police. The Liberian National Police leadership and civil society members informed the mission that many people were afraid to report crimes, knowing that the perpetrators could be released back into the community within days and seek revenge. In that regard, some interlocutors characterized the justice system in Liberia as a "death trap". As a result of enhanced State capacity to effect arrest without complementary structures, the judicial and corrections systems are plagued by long pretrial detentions and jailbreaks, including the escape of 40 inmates from the Zwedru correctional facility on 16 April and 32 from Monrovia Central Prison on 16 May. To mitigate the problem of prolonged pretrial detention, the Government introduced mobile courts at the Monrovia facility, where 86 per cent of inmates are pretrial detainees.

Reintegration of former combatants

30. When the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme officially closed in April 2009, all 101,495 demobilized former combatants had been offered the opportunity to participate in a formal reintegration project. However, some 5,000 ex-combatants did not come forward to participate in the programme. The United Nations Development Programme informed the mission that ongoing community reintegration programmes were available to absorb this outstanding caseload.

31. Many of the assessment mission's interlocutors were of the view that the reintegration programme had been a "quick fix" that neither transformed the violent disposition of most of the former combatants nor provided them with sustainable livelihoods. Some cited a survey conducted in Lofa County last year by the United States Institute for Peace, which found that one third of combatants would be

willing to fight again if offered the right incentive. In Grand Bassa County, the Superintendent informed the mission that an estimated 43 per cent of the ex-combatants had successfully integrated into their communities, while the remaining 57 per cent were frequently agitating and required constant monitoring and engagement. Sustaining the modest gains of the reintegration programme will require a longer-term effort to transform the violent mindset of the former combatants, while also assisting them in finding sustainable employment opportunities. The mission determined that these challenges were beyond the scope of peacekeeping and would require a sustained intervention by the Government and its partners.

Extension of State authority throughout the country

32. Some progress has been made in extending State authority throughout the country. Basic administrative structures have been established in all counties, and administration buildings have been rehabilitated, furnished and equipped in 14 of the 15 county capitals. In the coming year, renovations are planned for 50 district headquarters through the county development funds and the United Nations Development Programme. The Government has devoted considerable attention to building the capacity of local officials in terms of good governance and security coordination. Financial services are now available outside of Monrovia, with Central Bank sub-offices in Bomi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh and Lofa counties, and commercial banks in eight counties. All county capitals now have access to mobile phone services.

33. Notwithstanding the expansion of some services to the counties, the overall capacity of State officials to deliver services to rural communities remains extremely limited. Few line ministries are deployed in the counties. Efforts to establish county-level coordination mechanisms, including for security, have been initiated; however, the reporting lines of the various county officials and security personnel are still to their respective ministries in Monrovia.

34. Accessing rural communities will present a considerable challenge once UNMIL aviation and other assets are no longer available. The Government of Liberia is developing plans to facilitate the mobility of its officials and security personnel, including options for road construction, water transport and aviation. Grand Gedeh and Maryland counties are now accessible by private aircraft. The railway line under construction by ArcelorMittal to transport iron ore, which will link Yekepa, Nimba County, with the Buchanan seaport in Grand Bassa County, could also bring benefits with regard to access to the interior.

III. Proposed adjustments to the United Nations Mission in Liberia

35. Liberia is still far from attaining "the steady state of security" which is the focus of the UNMIL strategic objective. As indicated in the assessment above, none of the country's key security institutions is operationally independent, and the Government's capacity to sustain its institutions remains severely limited. The mission therefore determined that the uneven progress made towards achieving the core benchmarks, coupled with the fragility of the prevailing peace, fully justified maintaining the phased, gradual consolidation, drawdown and withdrawal strategy

approved by the Security Council in its resolution 1712 (2006) of 29 September 2006. Furthermore, adjustments to the Mission's troop strength and configuration in the third drawdown stage should take into account the need to adequately secure the 2011 elections. In addition, based on the findings of the electoral needs assessment mission to Liberia referred to in paragraph 12 above, the Secretariat will review the capacities that the UNMIL military component will require during the electoral period. Recommendations in this regard will be included in my next progress report on UNMIL, due by 15 August 2009.

A. Previous adjustments to the strength and configuration of the Mission

Military component

36. As indicated in my previous reports, the pre-drawdown adjustments to UNMIL following the installation of the new Government in 2006, together with the first and second stages of the Mission's formal drawdown, completed in September 2008 and March 2009, respectively, reduced the Mission's troop strength from 15,250 military personnel to the current authorized strength of 10,231. The 10,231 military personnel include 250 troops deployed at the Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown, as well as 9,981 troops in Liberia, including eight infantry battalions and a force reserve (6,064 troops); force headquarters staff (90 staff officers); enabling units (3,688 military personnel); and 139 military observers.

Police component

37. During the first drawdown stage, the UNMIL police component was reduced by 105 police advisers in April 2008, leaving 498 police advisers and five formed police units in the country. The continued challenges experienced by the Liberian National Police, however, informed the recommendation contained in my report of 15 August 2008 (S/2008/553) to freeze the drawdown of the police advisory component and deploy two additional formed police units during the second drawdown stage. The Security Council approved those recommendations by its resolution 1836 (2008), and the authorized strength of the UNMIL police component currently stands at 1,375 personnel, including 498 police advisers, 32 corrections officers and seven formed police units.

B. Recommendations for the third stage of the UNMIL drawdown

Military component

1. Military guard force

38. In their discussions with the technical assessment mission, the Deputy Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Court's chief security adviser requested that UNMIL maintain the presence of its military guard force at its current troop strength of 250 troops, considering that the Court still houses eight high-profile convicted persons and also has in its custody highly confidential material used as evidence in the judicial proceedings, confidential records and witness statements. Adequate security for those documents is essential while the Court is still in operation.

39. Court officials emphasized that the security risks facing the Special Court remain high and that the stability around the Court is due to the presence of the military guard force. The main national corrections facility in Sierra Leone, located near the Special Court and guarded by national security authorities, has experienced several prisoner escapes. The assessment mission therefore recommended maintaining the military guard force at its present strength. The continued deployment of the guard force will be reviewed on a regular basis, as the timelines for completion of the Court's work become clearer, including the transfer of prisoners to third countries.

2. Troops deployed in Liberia

40. With regard to the 9,981 troops deployed in Liberia, the technical assessment mission, in determining its recommendations, conducted a thorough threat assessment; examined the capacity of the Government of Liberia to respond to military threats; analysed the posture and composition of the UNMIL military component; conducted a troop-to-task analysis; and determined the military strength required to secure the 2011 elections. The mission concluded that the following further adjustments would be possible in the third drawdown stage: (a) 2,029 troops (two infantry battalions and 365 additional military personnel, including personnel repatriated as a result of the adjustments proposed in (c) and (d) below), could be repatriated between October 2009 and May 2010, leaving UNMIL military strength in Liberia at 7,952 troops; (b) the force could generate efficiencies and savings by repatriating redundant combat equipment, including three of its six attack helicopters and 72 of its 167 armoured personnel carriers; (c) the strength of UNMIL sector A headquarters could be reduced by 30 staff officers; (d) one signal company could be reduced by 59 personnel; and (e) UNMIL should gradually consolidate its locations and bases, shifting to a more mobile posture. Implementation of this new concept of operations would, however, take into account the force's mandate to protect United Nations personnel and facilities and to facilitate humanitarian activities.

41. The assessment mission advised that any significant change in the Mission's deployment locations would require consultations with the Government of Liberia and the United Nations country team to ensure a continued military presence at strategic locations. The mission also emphasized that maintaining the present capabilities of UNMIL enabling units, in particular its utility helicopters and engineering, transport and medical units, would be critical for the implementation of the drawdown, re-posturing and mobility of the force.

42. While the military guard force in Freetown will be withdrawn once the Special Court has completed its work, possibly late in 2010, it is recommended that the 7,952 troops remaining in Liberia at the end of the third drawdown stage be maintained through the 2011 elections. The timelines for the final drawdown stages would be determined on the basis of the findings of a technical assessment mission to be conducted after the completion of the elections.

3. UNMIL reinforcement of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

43. The technical assessment mission and a military team from UNOCI reviewed plans for the possible reinforcement of UNOCI by UNMIL during the Ivorian elections, in the event that such reinforcement becomes necessary. Under the

contingency plan, UNMIL would temporarily deploy one military company and four helicopters, which would be positioned in Côte d'Ivoire, if required, approximately one month before the elections, now scheduled for 29 November 2009. It is important to note that such an arrangement would be utilized only if other reinforcement options available to UNOCI were insufficient or unavailable. However, the arrangement would not remain valid after the completion of the Mission's third drawdown stage in May 2010, as the UNMIL military component would no longer have sufficient capability to reinforce UNOCI.

Police component

44. Given the serious challenges that continue to impede progress in developing the Liberian National Police, the technical assessment mission recommended that no further reduction be made to the UNMIL police component during the third drawdown stage. As indicated in my previous reports, further adjustments in the level of the UNMIL police component would be linked to progress achieved in standing up and fully deploying a competent and credible national police force.

45. The five-year strategic plan for the national police could provide an overarching strategy to integrate the contributions of UNMIL, the Government of Liberia, its donor partners and the national police leadership. While efforts at developing the police should be enhanced, coordination is required in order to meet identified priorities, including developing the management and administrative capacity, specialized skills and professionalism of the national police. The assessment mission determined that many of the deficiencies in the mentoring provided by UNMIL police advisers could be rectified if police-contributing countries deployed qualified police officers in accordance with the requirements specified in the strategic plan. The specific capabilities required include specialist advisers in the areas of forensics, professional standards, investigations, training, human resources and strategic management. The mission also determined that the UNMIL police component should establish internal oversight mechanisms to ensure that its police advisers are adequately engaged in their mentoring responsibilities. To address deficiencies earlier identified in the formed police units deployed to United Nations peacekeeping operations, a dedicated team was deployed to Liberia in April to conduct a five-month pilot training programme aimed at improving operational effectiveness and response.

Civilian component

46. UNMIL continues to adjust its civilian component, as appropriate, to adapt to evolving priorities. The Mission will make adjustments to the reintegration, rehabilitation and recovery, and humanitarian coordination sections in the budget cycle starting July 2009 in the light of the progress made in those areas and the increased capacity of the Government and the United Nations country team. The Mission has also realigned various civilian sections in order to meet the current priorities of the Government of Liberia and to ensure effective integration within UNMIL and between the Mission and the country team.

Support

47. The rainy season in Liberia presents unique challenges for UNMIL in terms of its logistical requirements, including during drawdown periods. During five months

of the year, the probability of reaching remote locations by helicopter is less than 50 per cent. Aviation assets are nonetheless an important aspect of the Mission's ability to transport and supply its personnel, also providing critical assistance to the United Nations country team and the Government in gaining access to counties in the interior. The assessment mission determined that UNMIL should conduct a thorough review of the runways in Liberia with a view to determining if an all-weather cargo aircraft such as a C-130 would be a cost-effective means of deploying the force reserve in remote areas or of extracting troops and heavy equipment during drawdown and regular repatriation.

48. Accessing the counties in the south-eastern part of the country is particularly challenging, owing to the limited road network, which becomes impassable during the rainy season. UNMIL engineering units, together with the engineering elements of the new Armed Forces of Liberia, are making efforts to keep the roads open. However, as neither UNMIL nor its partners have the capacity to asphalt roads other than the main strategic Monrovia-Gbarnga-Buchanan route, roads that have already been rehabilitated deteriorate rapidly. The Government, the World Bank, the United States and UNMIL have initiated efforts to reform the seaport in Monrovia, and efforts to rehabilitate ports at Buchanan, Greenville and Harper are pending. Plans to extract nine sunken ships from various seaports, including the Greenville port, which is used by UNMIL to supply and extract its troops, remain to be implemented. In view of the logistical challenges to facilitating the concentration and mobility of the force and sustaining the troops, the assessment mission advised that UNMIL maintain at present capability all of its military and civilian logistical and support resources.

Safety and security of personnel

49. Crime continues to pose a major threat to United Nations personnel operating in Liberia. In the period from November 2008 to May 2009, 901 safety and security incidents against United Nations personnel were reported, including 18 residential armed robberies. The risk to UNMIL civilian personnel and the United Nations country team is, however, mitigated by the presence of the UNMIL force deployed to all the areas of the country where the United Nations country team is implementing projects, in addition to strategic United Nations installations. In reviewing the safety and security requirements for United Nations personnel, locations and installations, the technical assessment mission recognized the need for a continued UNMIL force presence in those areas to enable the unhindered delivery of United Nations programmes and activities throughout Liberia, while also considering alternative security arrangements that would allow for the further consolidation and drawdown of the UNMIL force. The continued presence of the UNMIL force will be required at key strategic United Nations locations and installations until a full security assessment has been conducted by the Department of Safety and Security to determine those locations that will require a continued UNMIL force or alternative civilian security arrangements.

IV. Future direction of the United Nations Mission in Liberia

50. At the end of the third drawdown stage, in May 2010, UNMIL will gradually reconfigure the 7,952 troops remaining in Liberia, as described in paragraph 40 above, maintaining that posture and strength throughout the electoral period.

Security conditions permitting, the UNMIL drawdown would resume at an accelerated pace during the post-election period.

51. In anticipation of the eventual withdrawal of the Mission after the 2011 elections, UNMIL and the United Nations country team have initiated joint transition planning with a view to ensuring continued delivery of programmes by the country team in the absence of UNMIL logistical and transport assets. Resources are increasingly being pooled in order to maximize effectiveness, and joint offices bringing together UNMIL and the country team have been established in Voinjama and Zwedru.

52. The UNMIL exit strategy will require careful planning of the gradual handover of security responsibilities to the Government of Liberia. This transition planning should involve the Government, UNMIL, the United Nations country team and other concerned partners, including ECOWAS, in preparation for the final withdrawal of UNMIL. Given their limited numbers, the Armed Forces of Liberia and the Liberian National Police will not be in a position to replace UNMIL capabilities or provide the same security umbrella. Consequently, a clear strategy for utilizing all of the security and rule-of-law institutions of Liberia in all counties will be essential. Developing a security strategy for each county should be based on a careful threat analysis and take into account the functions and capacities of all security and rule-of-law institutions present in that county. In this regard, the Government and its partners should develop clear criteria for declaring each county ready for UNMIL to hand over security responsibilities to national authorities. The comprehensive technical assessment mission to be deployed to Liberia following the 2011 elections will focus on the handover of UNMIL responsibilities to national authorities and, based on the status of those arrangements and conditions on the ground, develop recommendations for the subsequent drawdown stage and final withdrawal.

V. Observations

53. The Government of Liberia, with the assistance of its international partners, has made commendable progress towards consolidating stability in the country and implementing its ambitious reform and recovery agenda. Once the epicentre of conflict, Liberia now has the potential to become a pillar of peace and stability in a troubled subregion. At the same time, the complex nature and magnitude of the challenges inherited from the civil war and the dysfunctional pre-war State continue to pose serious difficulties for building essential national institutions, particularly in the security and rule-of-law sectors, requiring a sustained, long-term effort. Consequently, although it has been six years since the war ended, Liberia is still a fragile State. The calm that currently prevails is highly vulnerable to disruption and the gains that have been made are susceptible to reversals. I therefore call on all international partners to stay the course in Liberia, to help further consolidate the fragile peace and establish the conditions for lasting stability.

54. For its part, UNMIL will strive to meet the strategic goal set by the Security Council and agreed with the Government, namely, assisting Liberia in achieving a steady state of security with fully operational national police and armed forces. Once the army and police are operational, Liberia will also need considerable continued assistance from its partners to sustain them. Moreover, the efforts to establish a credible and competent police force must be complemented by

commensurate efforts to develop credible and functioning judicial and corrections systems. The Government and its partners should therefore invest more resources in reforming and developing the justice system, expanding its accessibility to the population and ridding it of corruption and archaic and discriminatory laws. I also recognize that a durable security "steady state" will require more than standing up fully operational security and justice institutions. Economic recovery is critical in order to provide sustainable employment opportunities and deliver on the promised peace dividend.

55. The people and the Government of Liberia must also pursue genuine reconciliation at the national and grass-roots levels. In particular, urgent steps are needed to address the many divisive issues rooted in the country's past, which continue to have ramifications for the peace consolidation efforts. I urge all Liberian citizens, including civil society, political parties and religious and traditional leaders, to engage in sustained efforts to cultivate a political culture based on dialogue and mutual accommodation aimed at forging a national consensus on addressing contentious issues.

56. I am very concerned about the threat that the global financial crisis poses to the post-conflict recovery efforts of Liberia. The gains made on the socio-economic front are at serious risk of disruption. National revenues are shrinking as a result of the downturn in the productive sector, and the Government is facing a budget shortfall of $14.7 million for the fiscal year 2008/09. I call on the donor community to provide the necessary support to assist the country in weathering the shocks from the crisis, including through direct budgetary support.

57. The continued stability of Liberia will also depend on the evolution of the situation in the subregion. Elections are expected this year in both Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, and Sierra Leone is settling into its own post-war peace. The international community should help these important processes to succeed, as they will contribute to the long-term stability of Liberia and the entire subregion. The scourge of transnational drug trafficking, which has already had a catastrophic effect on other fragile States in the subregion, is also a source of serious concern. I am, however, encouraged by the good-neighbourliness and security cooperation fostered in the context of the Mano River Union, and call for continued efforts in that regard.

58. Notwithstanding the remaining challenges, the sustained stability and the absence of any immediate military threat to Liberia provide scope for further adjustments to the Mission's troop strength. Based on the findings of the technical assessment mission, I recommend that the Security Council approve the plan for the third stage of the UNMIL drawdown, as described in paragraphs 38 to 49 of the present report. These recommendations are aimed at maximizing the Mission's operational effectiveness while also ensuring the retention of capabilities needed to provide adequate security for the 2011 elections. The recommended repatriation of 2,029 troops between October 2009 and May 2010 would leave UNMIL military strength at 8,202 personnel, including 7,952 in Liberia and 250 in Sierra Leone. This proposal represents an acceleration of the drawdown pace initially proposed in my report of 10 February 2009 (S/2009/86). In addition, the reduction of excess combat equipment, including attack helicopters and armoured personnel carriers, will result in substantial savings for the Mission.

59. In view of the ongoing work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, I concur with the recommendation of the technical assessment mission to maintain the

UNMIL military guard force in Freetown until the convicted persons have been transferred to third countries and the Court has been liquidated. As the timelines for the completion of the Court's work become clearer, the strength of the guard force will be reviewed, and I will keep the Security Council informed of any envisaged adjustments.

60. Five years have been invested in training, equipping and deploying the national police, which should have been sufficient for standing up a national police force fully capable of operating independently of UNMIL. I am deeply concerned about the challenges still facing the cooperative efforts of UNMIL, the Government of Liberia and bilateral partners to develop a professional national police force. Urgent action is therefore required to operationalize the Liberian National Police strategic plan, which could help to address the shortcomings in the effort to develop the police. I strongly urge the partners of Liberia to provide the assistance needed to implement that strategic plan. In view of the challenges described in the present report, I concur with the recommendation of the technical assessment mission that the UNMIL police component maintain its current strength of 1,375 personnel. I also appeal to police-contributing countries to provide UNMIL with experienced police officers who have the specialized skills identified in the strategic plan, which will help enhance the Mission's mentorship of the national police.

61. Given the limited capacity of the security institutions of Liberia and the potentially destabilizing factors identified in the present report, I support the recommendations of the technical assessment mission to maintain the UNMIL force level at 7,952 troops in Liberia through the 2011 elections, and to include the conduct of free and fair elections on the list of core benchmarks. The development of plans for the accelerated drawdown and final withdrawal of UNMIL will be based on a further technical assessment conducted after the elections. By that time, the Government, UNMIL and all relevant partners should have finalized a detailed strategy and plan for the progressive, county-by-county handover of security responsibilities to national authorities.

62. In conclusion, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my Special Representative for Liberia, Ellen Margrethe Løj, and UNMIL civilian and uniformed personnel for their commitment in supporting the peace consolidation efforts of Liberia. I would also like to thank all troop- and police-contributing countries, ECOWAS, the African Union, the International Contact Group on Liberia, the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, humanitarian organizations and multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as international and local non-governmental organizations, for their important contributions.

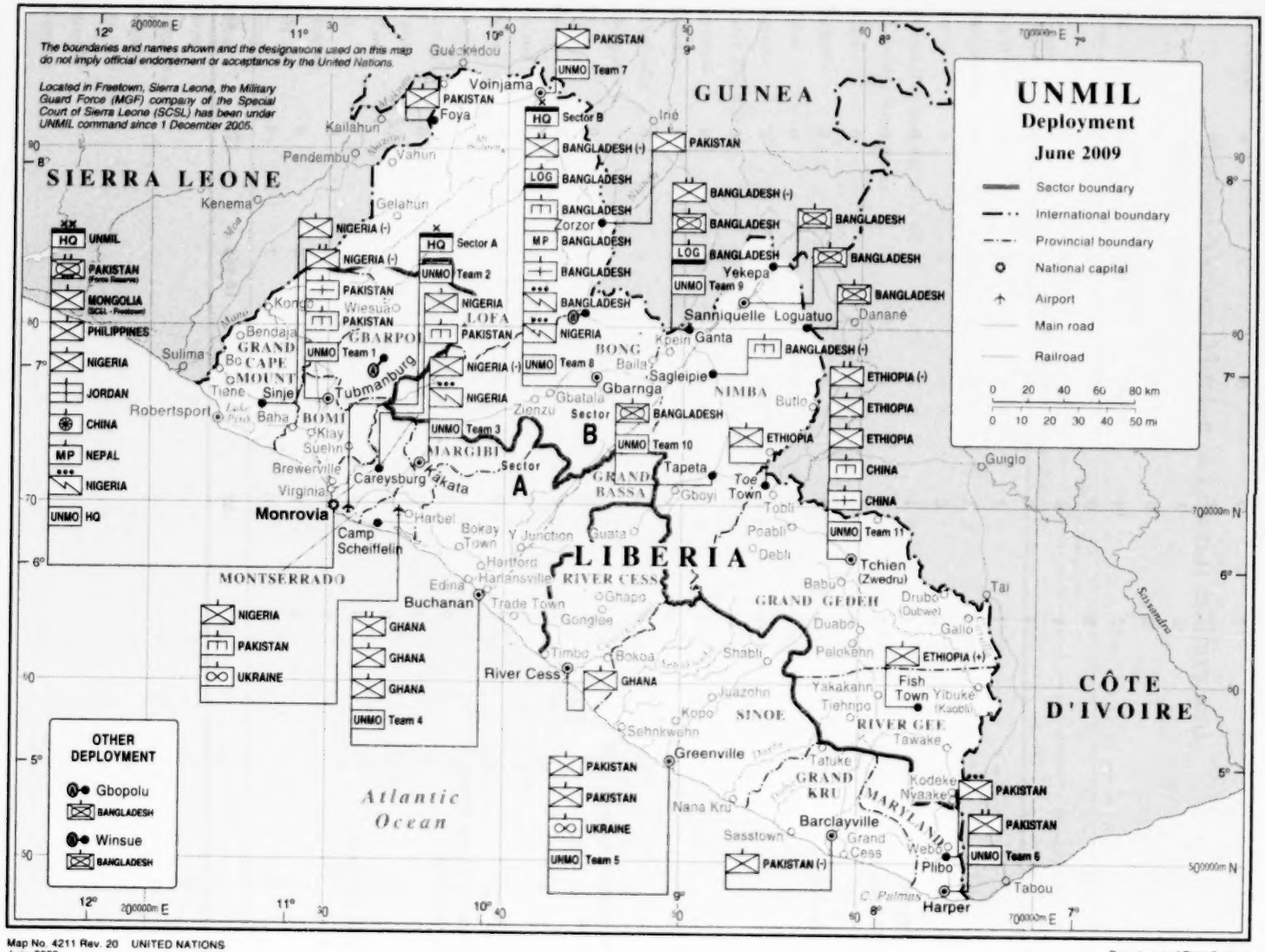
Annex

United Nations Mission in Liberia: military and police strength

(As at 31 May 2009)

Country	Military component				Formed police units	Civilian police
	Military observers	Staff officers	Troops	Total		
Argentina	0	0	0	0	0	6
Bangladesh	11	9	2 332	2 352	0	17
Benin	2	1	0	3	0	0
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2	1	0	3	0	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0	0	0	0	9
Brazil	0	2	0	2	0	0
Bulgaria	2	0	0	2	0	0
China	2	5	558	565	0	16
Croatia	0	3	0	3	0	0
Czech Republic	0	0	0	0	0	5
Denmark	2	0	0	2	0	0
Ecuador	2	1	0	3	0	0
El Salvador	2	0	0	2	0	4
Ethiopia	13	4	870	887	0	0
Egypt	5	0	0	5	0	3
Fiji	0	0	0	0	0	31
Finland	0	2	0	2	0	0
France	0	1	0	1	0	0
Gambia	2	0	0	2	0	19
Germany	0	0	0	0	0	6
Ghana	9	7	700	716	0	37
Iceland	0	0	0	0	0	2
India	0	0	0	0	125	3
Indonesia	2	0	0	2	0	0
Italy	0	0	0	0	0	1
Jamaica	0	0	0	0	0	1
Jordan	4	5	115	124	237	19
Kenya	0	0	0	0	0	20
Kyrgyzstan	3	0	0	3	0	4
Malawi	0	0	0	0	0	2
Mali	2	0	0	2	0	0
Malaysia	6	0	0	6	0	0
Mongolia	0	2	248	250	0	0

Montenegro	2	0	0	2	0	0
Namibia	0	3	0	3	0	6
Nepal	2	3	15	20	240	10
Niger	2	0	0	2	0	0
Nigeria	15	10	1 649	1 674	120	26
Norway	0	0	0	0	0	9
Pakistan	9	8	3 022	3 039	0	21
Paraguay	2	0	0	2	0	0
Peru	2	2	0	4	0	0
Philippines	4	3	135	142	0	26
Poland	2	0	0	2	0	3
Republic of Korea	1	1	0	2	0	0
Republic of Moldova	2	0	0	2	0	0
Romania	2	0	0	2	0	0
Russian Federation	4	0	0	4	0	13
Rwanda	0	0	0	0	0	5
Samoa	0	0	0	0	0	0
Senegal	1	2	0	3	0	0
Serbia	4	0	0	4	0	6
Sri Lanka	0	0	0	0	0	6
Sweden	0	0	0	0	0	16
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Togo	2	2	0	4	0	0
Turkey	0	0	0	0	0	32
Uganda	0	0	0	0	0	18
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	0	2	0	2	0	0
Ukraine	2	2	300	304	0	12
Uruguay	0	0	0	0	0	4
United States of America	4	4	0	8	0	13
Yemen	0	0	0	0	0	8
Zambia	2	0	0	2	0	17
Zimbabwe	2	0	0	2	0	32
Total	**137**	**85**	**9 944**	**10 166**	**722**	**488**



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